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ABSTRACT

The Public Service Research Program at the University of California at Davis is described. The goal of the program is to develop a systematic approach to an integrated community/university program. Requirements are that a public policy issue must be addressed, faculty and students must be involved, and collaboration with a government agency or a community must occur. Collaborative research projects with government agencies, commissioned papers, and workshops, conferences, and symposia form the basis of the program. The importance of dissemination of results, extension networks using courses, and/or consultation are an important part of the public service research process. The program is supported by a networking function performed by the central program staff. Factors that have contributed to the success of the program are noted. (SW)

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A MODEL OF UNIVERSITY/AGENCY COLLABORATION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATION

Prepared for the

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The University of California, Davis is the third largest of the nine campuses of the University of California system. Chartered in 1868 as a land grant institution, the University established the "University Farm" in 1905 in the town of Davisville, fifteen miles from Sacramento, the state capitol. Expansion of the "Farm" continued through 1959 when it was designated as a general campus. Today UCD covers 3,579 acres, has an enrollment of approximately 17,000 students, and includes a Graduate Division, a Division of Extended Learning, Schools of Law, Administration, Veterinary Medicine, and Medicine, and Colleges of Engineering, Letters and Science, and Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. In the State's Master Plan for Higher Education, the University is charged as being "the primary state supported academic agency for research."

Since its beginning, UCD has been known for its outstanding work in the agricultural field. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station, faculty conduct research in areas ranging from renewable natural resources to animal husbandry and plant physiology to community development and international agricultural development. Besides the traditional disciplinary departments within the schools and colleges, UCD has ten major Organized Research Units (ORUs) on campus. ORUs have a special role in the University, serving as focal points for interdisciplinary research. ORUs such as the Institute of Governmental Affairs, the Institute of Ecology, the Center for Consumer Research, the Appropriate Technology Program (while the Appropriate Technology Program is not a formal ORU, it is a focal point for appropriate technology research at the University of California), and the Food Protection and Toxicology Center, are excellent resources for policy oriented and public service research projects.

The Davis campus also has several other resources that complement its research capabilities. University Extension and Cooperative Extension provide continuing education and consultation services to citizens in California and play important roles in disseminating the results of ongoing research efforts. These resources and others make UCD a dynamic campus that has tried to meet the changing needs of the public it serves.

In spite of these resources, in the early 1970s the California legislature, state agencies and local governments had been critical of the University of California for not meeting the needs of state and local governments and regional and community agencies. In part this criticism was justified because the character of University research traditionally did not focus on complex policy issues that cut across disciplinary lines.

However, a study conducted in 1977 of the relationship between the legislature and UCD by Professor Paul Sabatier[1] revealed that the Davis faculty feel that they and the University do have a responsibility to make their expertise available to policy-makers and that they are willing to personally bring their expertise to bear on public policy issues if their talents are used effectively and efficiently. In the past, public service research has been predominantly directed to serve both national and international issues. Recently, the faculty has recognized the opportunities for sound research on state problems. This shift is supported by Sabatier's findings which indicate that the majority of UCD faculty feel that policy oriented research is a legitimate scholarly activity and that it does not necessarily adversely affect one's professional advancement within the University. Sabatier speculates that this willingness to address state issues is untapped because proper linking mechanisms do not exist.

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[1]Sabatier, Paul. The Sacramento Connection. Kellogg Public Service Research Program and IGA, February, 1978.

A similar area of concern is the relationship between University faculty and regional and local agencies. Like the state, these groups had been critical of the University's ability to respond to their needs. In light of recent and potential budget cuts, the ability of small agencies or local governments to conduct policy-oriented research is severely limited. Cooperative efforts between them and the university can be most productive.

These criticisms, coupled with the university's own desire to improve and expand its ability to serve the public, were crucial in the development of the Public Service Research Program. In 1976, U.C. Davis expanded its public service research capabilities through a $1.2 million, five-year grant supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, "The University and Public Policy: New Models for Communication, Action and Change." The grant, administered by the Division of Extended Learning, has allowed the University to experiment with new types of public service mechanisms. Indeed, some of the previous criticisms of the University have been diminished in part because of the substantial accomplishments of the Kellogg Public Service Research Program. Comments from legislative, agency and community representatives have praised the efforts of the Program and the campus to develop mechanisms to enhance the public service research activities of the campus and thus the quality of policy analysis by decision-makers.

The goal of the Public Service Research Program is to develop a systematic approach to an integrated community-university program in which a continuous flow of ideas and knowledge exists. This is graphically depicted in Figure 1. During the last three years, we have found that a successful Public Service Research project depends upon three key ingredients coming together simultaneously, as shown in Figure 2. First, a public policy issue must be addressed. Second, faculty and students must be involved. Third, collaboration with a government agency or a community during all phases of the project must occur. The public service role of the University is to provide access to

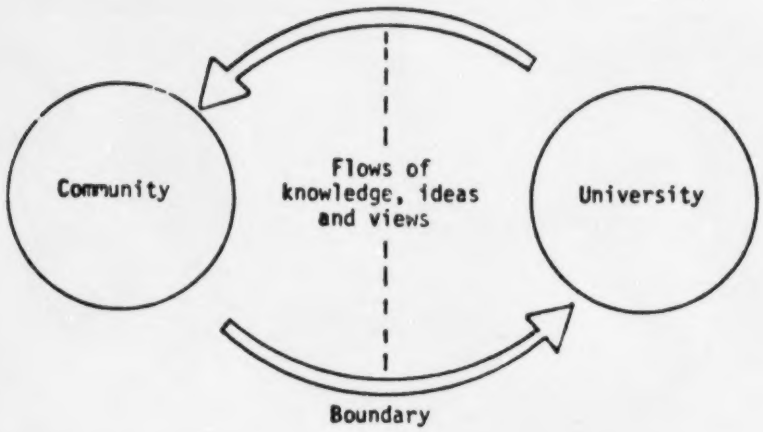

Figure 1: The relationship between the University and the community. Taken from the original proposal to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

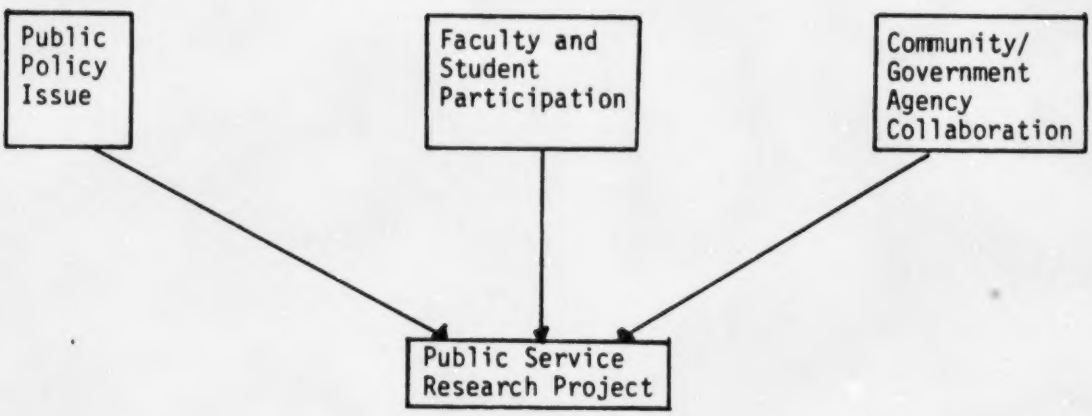

Figure 2: Key ingredients to a successful Public Service Research Program project

scholarly information with which policy makers can then examine their options in making decisions. This is in contrast to the faculty being involved in the actual decision-making process.

Three major public service activities form the core of the Program: (1) collaborative research projects with government agencies, (2) commissioned papers, and (3) workshops, conferences and symposia. Although the latter two activities are important to the overall program, the strength and perhaps the uniqueness of the UCD effort center around the collaobrative research projects that are undertaken by faculty and students with government agencies. The recognition by agencies of UCD's research strengths, the willingness of the faculty to participate in collaborative projects that often are interdisciplinary in nature, and the commitment of the UCD administration to this type of public service research activity is in large part responsible for the success of the Program.

The current mode of operation did not develop overnight, but is a result of several years of experience and trial and error. For example, it was found that although some agency needs are best served through collaborative research, this type of activity works best when there is a definite scholarly research component to the project (thus allowing the faculty to publish in traditional journals) and when the agency has some form of research staff with whom the faculty can work. Other agency needs may be met through formal conferences or informal symposia which focus on policy issues. Although the Public Service Research process is well established now at UCD, having been accepted as an appropriate area for faculty involvement, an evolutionary phase was necessary until the current types of activities were developed and until the concept of collaborative public policy research and dissemination activities became more

acceptable to the faculty.* Indeed, as the program has become more established, the interest among the faculty has grown. It is quite likely, too, that as the program continues in operation, the existing strategies will be refined and new ones developed.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the three public service research activities do not exist separately, but are interrelated. For example, one result of a research project may be a symposium. Or a conference may point out the need for new research or a series of papers commissioned that define the state of the art or reveal information gaps in a particular area. Each of the three areas is described below.

Collaborative research projects are planned jointly between the faculty and agency. Collaboration at the problem identification stage is extremely important. The process works best when the agency has a research capability, although often the faculty assist in providing research skills that the agency does not have. The project is organized so that the practical needs of the agency and the academic needs of the faculty are both met. A work plan is agreed upon and a time frame set.

While the faculty provide the leadership, students often carry out a large part of the research, either as assistants to the faculty or as the primary link between the University and the agency. This mechanism has been a key to the faculty's willingness to undertake work with outside agencies. New research projects often result from the issues raised in previous projects.

Commissioned papers are a specialized type of activity designed to bring together information that often is not available in a readily accessible

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*This does not imply that all faculty accept the public service research concept, only that as the experience of successful projects is more visible, the activity has become less threatening to the faculty.

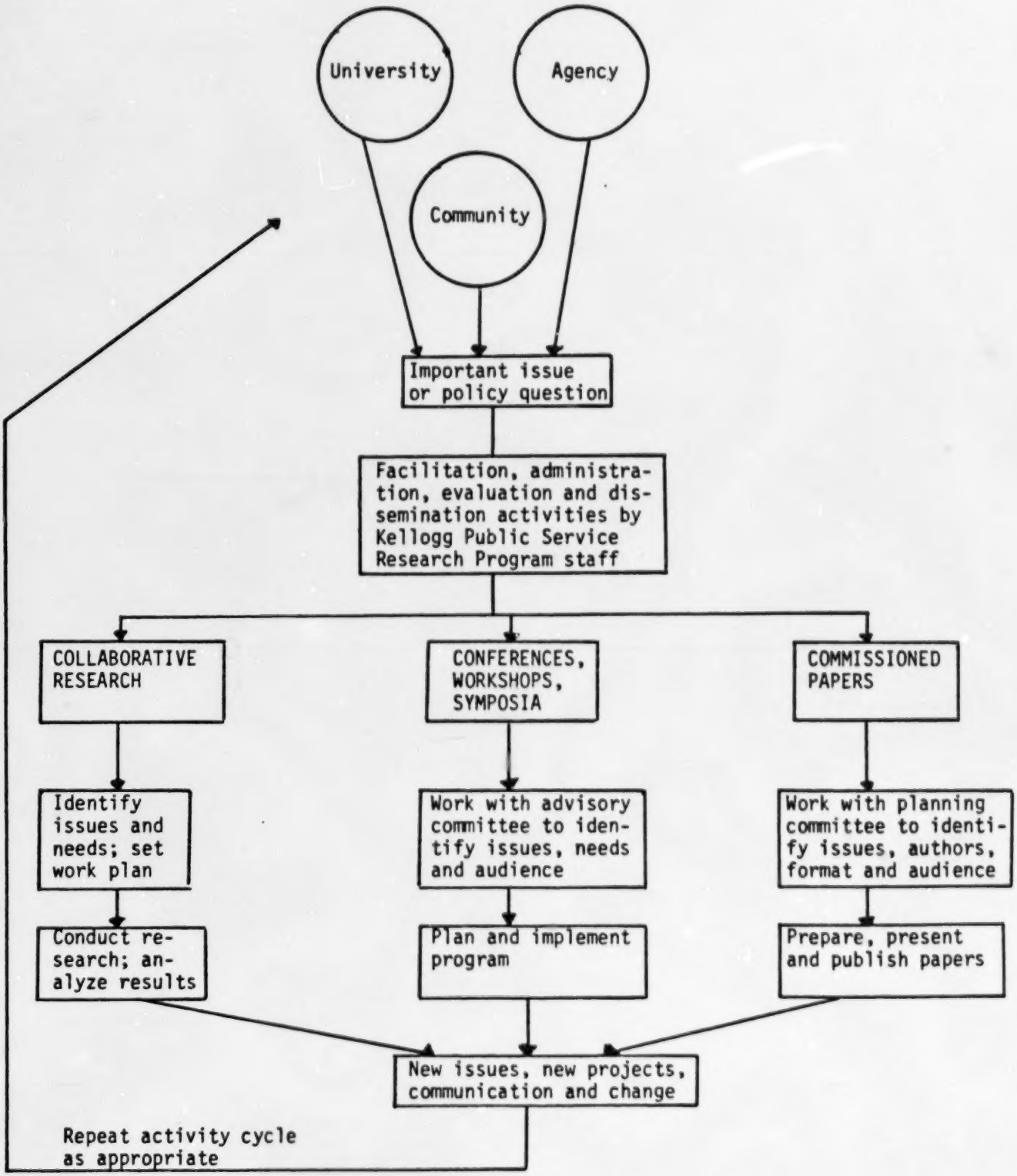
University
Agency
Community
Important issue or policy question
Facilitation, administration, evaluation and dissemination activities by Kellogg Public Service Research Program staff
COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, SYMPOSIA
COMMISSIONED PAPERS
Identify issues and needs; set work plan
Work with advisory committee to identify issues, needs and audience
Work with planning committee to identify issues, authors, format and audience
Conduct research; analyze results
Plan and implement program
Prepare, present and publish papers
New issues, new projects, communication and change
Repeat activity cycle as appropriate

Figure 3: Flow chart for the Kellogg Public Service Research Program activity process

form. The papers examine an issue by drawing together state-of-the-art research and thinking. Scholars from the nine UC campuses and other universities or agencies are asked to prepare papers. The papers are often co-sponsored by several UC Programs, thus bringing together different resources in new ways. An advisory committee helps to direct the project so that key issues are addressed and a common format maintained. The papers are presented in a conference or symposia setting and are always published and made available to the public. New issues and research areas often emerge which may feed back into the conference or research loops. Follow-up activity may or may not require Kellogg support, since other programs may fund the new work.

Conferences, workshops and symposia are ways of exploring issues. They involve bringing together faculty, agency staff and community members to exchange ideas, review projects or discuss important issues. Conferences are major, formal programs, utilizing speakers, panelists and workshops. When fees are charged, the program is offered through University Extension. Workshops are more informal than conferences. They are designed to explore various sides of an issues, produce an action strategy or teach a skill. Symposia are informal gatherings designed to promote open discussion between faculty, agency personnel and citizens. Conference, workshop and symposia programs are organized with the assistance of an advisory or planning committee, composed of University, government and community representatives. The committee helps identify key issues and refine the program topic, suggest speakers and format, audience, etc.

The individual collaborative research, commissioned papers and conference activities are not conducted in isolation, but are part of the total Public Service Research Program that reaches out to link the university with community groups and government agencies. The three activities are inter-related and always involve some form of dissemination, either as a primary or follow-up objective.

Dissemination is an important element of the overall Public Service Research process and may take several forms. A conference may be used to review and disseminate the results of a collaborative research project, to explore an issue, or to commission a set of papers. Conference proceedings are frequently published and distributed beyond the conference attendees. Faculty often publish scholarly articles based on collaborative research projects. Major publications, co-sponsored by the Public Service Research Program, the partner agency and other university resources, also result from projects. Students often base all or part of their theses or dissertation on Public Service Research projects. Dissemination also occurs through University and Cooperative Extension networks using courses and/or consultation.

A more subtle type of dissemination occurs through institutional, legislative or attitudinal change that may result from implementation of project results. Some changes may be readily apparent and immediate, such as new legislation or improved human service programs, or less tangible, such as the contributions a project makes towards the understanding of a policy issue. Because of the complexity of the issues involved, other changes may not be apparent for several years. These are important, yet subtle changes that affect attitudes, funding for research, University and agency organization, improved graduate education, increased interdisciplinary research, and closer ties between the University, government and communities.

The entire Public Service Research Program is supported by a networking function performed by the central Program staff. A series of support activities tie together the often diverse projects funded under the aegis of the Public Service Research Program. Projects also are coordinated with other university programs. Administration and budgetary functions are handled by Program staff. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the individual projects and the public service research process is coordinated within the Program office. Facilitation

in securing access to University resources is provided by the staff. This is a very important function that is effective in promoting informal and formal linkages and working partnerships between faculty, agency staff and communities. Finally, dissemination projects are initiated, coordinated and supported within the Program office. In summary, where appropriate, the program staff works closely with faculty and agencies during all stages of a project.

One other factor that contributes to the overall success of the Public Service Research Program must be mentioned. Agency or community contributions to a project are extremely important to the success of the Program's activities. Some cooperating agencies with relatively large resources provide direct support, such as travel, publication or computer expenses. Other agencies with less abundant resources are able to provide in-kind support, such as office space, secretarial assistance and data. Often, a staff person is assigned to work on the project. Although it is difficult to assign a dollar value to this direct personnel participation, it is nevertheless quite important and should not be overlooked.

Thus, through a series of experiments, the Public Service Research Program at UCD has evolved into a major campus activity that attempts to integrate scholarly research and public service activity. There are four primary factors that have assisted the development of the program: (1) the commitment of the campus administration to this type of activity is high; (2) the interdisciplinary structure of many campus departments is institutionalized and supports collaborative research; (3) the long-term nature of the Kellogg grant has allowed experimentation and long range planning and has provided incentives to faculty and students to participate in public service research activities; and (4) the availability of funds to support graduate students enhances graduate education in many departments.